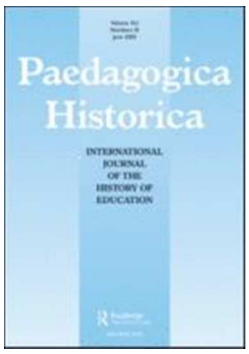

"What kind of silence is being broken?": A Visual-Rhetorical History of the Out-of-Home Placement of Children in Poverty in 1990s Belgium

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Figure 1

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 2

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 3

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 4

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 5

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 6

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Figure 7

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 8

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

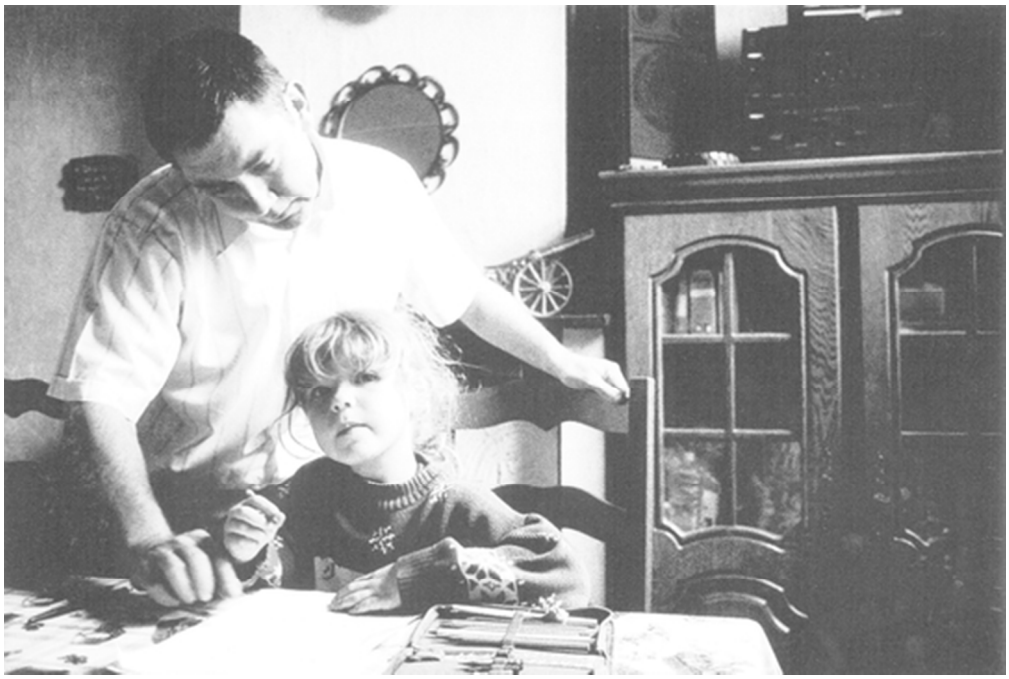

Figure 9

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 10

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 11

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 12

45x30mm (300 x 300 DPI)

"What kind of silence is being broken?": A Visual-Rhetorical History of the Out-of-Home Placement of Children in Poverty in 1990s Belgium

In this article it is assumed that the documentary impulse that gave the impetus to Courage, a photobook on people in poverty published in Belgium in 1998, is related to how the General Report on Poverty, published in 1994, accused the sector of child welfare and protection services of a far too authoritative and coercive approach. This article analyses Courage in relation to the issue of out-of-home placement of children in poverty following the framework Cara A. Finnegan proposes in order to do rhetorical history of visual images. In this deductive approach the article is paying attention to important moments in the life of photographs: production, reproduction and circulation. This is combined with an inductive approach to generate a rhetorical understanding of the distinct generic characteristics of the visual artefact, in which attention is paid to the substantive as well as the stylistic characteristics of the images. The article attempts to analyse and explain systematically how symbolic acts and artefacts construe rhetorical processes on poverty, and explore how images of children and parents in poverty situations in the "rhetorical artefact" Courage can become "objects to think with".

Keywords poverty, out-of-home placement, documentary photography, rhetorical history, visual rhetoric

Introduction

"The impulse to create begins – often terribly and fearfully – in a tunnel of silence.
Every real poem is in the breaking of an existing silence,
and the first question we might ask any poem is,
What kind of voice is breaking silence,
and what kind of silence is being broken?"[1]

With this quote, the famous American poet and essayist Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) expressed her belief that poetry plays a crucial role as a breaker of silences, especially around "the oppressed, the invisible, the unheard".[2] It inspired Magnum photographer Stuart Franklin to devote his latest book to "the documentary impulse", what he describes as "the passion to record the moments we experience and wish to preserve, the things we witness and might want to reform, or simply the

[1] Adrienne Rich, *Arts of the possible: Essays and conversations* (New York: Norton, 2001), 150.

[2] Emily Taylor Merriman, ""The Spider Genius": Verse Technique as Liberating Force in Adrienne Rich's Poetry," in *"Catch if you can your country's moment": Recovery and Regeneration in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich*, ed. William S. Waddell (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 6–26 (here: 13).

people, places or things we find remarkable".[3] To Franklin, starting from John Grierson's definition of documentary as the "creative treatment of actuality",[4] documentary essentially is a "creative process full of contradictions", one that embraces a dual approach to the treatment of actuality.[5] There is the fact of the matter (the factuality), but to Franklin the distinguishing mark of documentary is the importance of intimacy over actuality, which also calls aesthetics into play.[6] Whilst documentary value lies in its striving to describe facts, like poetry, documentary photography might also play a vital role in breaking the silence or making visible what is hidden. This is particularly true in its anti-essentialist approach, when it instead of dwelling on a notion of a fixed world recognises the challenges faced by a society that is undergoing change. Indeed, documentary photography has been influential in advocating reform and is even recognised as one of the most long-standing categories in photography.[7] Amongst internationally renowned examples of this socially engaged photography are the works of Lewis Hine (1874-1940) and the Farm Security Agency (1935-1943) in the US and, more recently, the Survival Programmes project by the Exit Photography Group (1974-79) and the collective work of Amber Associates and Side Gallery (1970s-80s) in the UK.

[3] Stuart Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse* (London/New York: Phaidon Press, 2016), 5, 48. Franklin is former president of Magnum (2006-2009) and is worldwide known for his iconic "The Tank Man" photograph (1989). It is also referred to as "the recording impulse", see Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885-1918* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

[4] Ibid., 6. Grierson is the founding father of the British documentary film movement, see, e.g., Angelo Van Gorp, "'Springing from a sense of wonder': Classroom Film and Cultural Learning in the 1930s", *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 3 (2017), 285–299. It should be noticed, however, that Grierson's definition applied to *film* and not to photography.

[5] Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 6, 29.

[6] On the question of intimacy, see Alison Dean, "Intimacy at Work: Nan Goldin and Rineke Dijkstra", *History of Photography* 39, no. 2 (2015), 177–193; see also David Phillips, "Actuality and Affect in Documentary Photography", in *Using Visual Evidence*, eds. Richard Howells and Robert W. Matson (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press, 2009), 55–77; and Trachtenberg's notion of "pedagogical aesthetic" in Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

[7] See, e.g., Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*; Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London: SAGE, 2013), 88–89; Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Laurence King, 2006, 2nd ed.), 276–77; Cara Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty* (New York: Smithsonian Institution Scholar Press, 2003); Darren Newbury, "Photography and the Visualization of Working Class Lives in Britain", *Visual Anthropology Review* 15, no. 1 (1999), 21–44; Thilo Koenig, "The Other Half. The Investigation of Society", in *A New History of Photography*, ed. Michel Frizot (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), 346–357.

Our case-study on the visual representation of poverty by so-called self-advocacy organisations of people in poverty can be situated within this body of work.[8] At the beginning of the 1990s, several European welfare states have explicitly emphasised the importance of recognising the voice and life knowledge of people in poverty in the development of performative anti-poverty strategies.[9] In the international realm, grassroots organisations such as ATD Fourth World indeed framed poverty as a violation of human rights and advocated for the idea of talking *with* the poor rather than talking *about* or *to* people in poverty. Some proponents even proclaimed a paradigm shift from *advocacy* to *self-advocacy*[10] as people in poverty might "have the capacity to place, and indeed sometimes to force, life knowledge on the political, professional, academic and policy making agenda".[11]

In Belgium, the appearance of the *General Report on Poverty* (GRP) in 1994 was emblematic for this claim for recognition of the human rights and dignity of people in poverty on a variety of life domains. In the aftermath of the report, the necessity of grassroots organisations gained political recognition as "organisations where people in poverty take the floor".[12] In 1998, one of these organisations in Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium), the 'Beweging van Mensen met Laag Inkomen en Kinderen' (BMLIK, Movement of People with Low Income and Children), published a photobook called *Courage* in an attempt to call both the poor and the non-poor to social action.[13] BMLIK represents the interests of people living in deep poverty while also devoting special attention

[8] See also "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[9] Ruth Lister, "A Politics of Recognition and Respect: Involving People with Experience of Poverty in Decision making that Affects their Lives", *Social Policy and Society* 1, no. 1 (2002), 37–46; Michal Krumer-Nevo, "Listening to Life Knowledge': A New Research Direction in Poverty Studies", *International Journal of Social Welfare* 14, no. 2 (2005), 99–106; Id., "From Noise to Voice: How Social Work can benefit from the Knowledge of People living in Poverty", *International Social Work* 51, no. 4 (2008), 556–565.

[10] Peter Beresford and Suzy Croft, "It's our Problem too! Challenging the Exclusion of Poor People from Poverty Discourse", *Critical Social Policy* 15, no. 44-45 (1995), 75–95.

[11] Peter Beresford, "Service Users' Knowledges and Social Work Theory: Conflict or Collaboration?", *British Journal of Social Work* 30, no. 4 (2000), 489–503 (here: 493).

[12] The GRP is a white paper commissioned by the Belgian Government, see Koning Boudewijnstichting in collaboration with Beweging ATD Vierde Wereld and Vereniging van Belgische Steden en Gemeenten Afdeling Maatschappelijk Welzijn, *Algemeen Verslag over de Armoede (General Report on Poverty)* (Brussels: Koning Boudewijnstichting, 1994), 5. ATD Fourth World was founded near Paris in 1957 and soon became an international movement built on the assumption that poverty was a violation of human rights, see Hartley Dean, *Social rights and human welfare* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Lister, "A Politics of Recognition and Respect". The Belgian branch of ATD Fourth World was established in 1971 and BMLIK in 1983.

[13] BMLIK, *Courage: Armoede is een Schending van Mensenrechten (Courage: Poverty is a Violation of Human Rights)* (Oostakker: BMLIK, 1998).

to how societal interventions can break the cycle of an intergenerational transmission of poverty to their children.[14] Interestingly, the rhetoric of the book reflects one of the main messages expressed in the GRP, namely "a critique on the vulnerability of families in poverty for intrusive social work interventions in the field of child welfare and protection".[15] Based on the claim that "their right to a family life was at risk of being violated by the system of child protection",[16] parents in poverty situations revealed collectively that they were more often confronted with the pressure of selective child protection interventions, and more in particular with the out-of-home placement of their children.

Assuming that the documentary impulse that gave the impetus to *Courage* is related to how the GRP accused the sector of child welfare and protection services of a far too authoritative and coercive approach, *Courage* offers 72 images that make up the main body of the book, being interspersed with oral testimonies and accompanied by an introduction and a postscript that serve as a kind of guiding yet activist narrative.[17] In this contribution, we explore what particular message *Courage* conveys as a symbolic attempt to break the silence about this experienced injustice, and focus more in particular on how *Courage* rhetorically constructs the relationship between parents and their children and aspects of their family life. In order to reveal that, we had to adopt a methodology that allowed us to analyse a photobook that essentially is an artefact that consists out of both visual and oral testimonies, the latter serving as a kind of extended caption and to be understood as part of the book's visual rhetoric.[18]

Rhetorical History and Visual Rhetoric

Examining the artefact, we needed a unit that could serve as a vehicle or lens for analysis. Obviously, the main feature to examine is the way children and parents are represented or referred to, both visually and textually. Hence, scanning the book on information related to the child, we are aware

[14] Deep poverty, also known as persistent poverty or generation poverty, refers to the situation of experiencing extreme poverty over generations within one and the same family. ATD Fourth World refers to it with the notion of Fourth World.

[15] Lieve Bradt et al., "Poverty and Decision Making in Child Welfare and Protection: Deepening the Bias–Need Debate", *British Journal of Social Work* 45, no. 7 (2015), 2161–2175 (here: 2163).

[16] Ibid.

[17] A profound analysis of the book's materiality and subject matter can be found in "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[18] See, e.g., Susan Sontag, *On photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1979); "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing". On the interaction of pictures and texts, see also W.T.J. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

that we reveal particular information and conceal other.[19] However, bearing in mind the human-rights perspective, in the postscript of the photobook we quickly found an emphasis on the right to have a family life:

> "We talk with one another about our efforts in the past and even today to raise our children at home, to be together with the whole family. However, this requires peace and security. Instead we are haunted by our problems because of lacking means and possibilities. Therefore, we [as BMLIK] defend the right to have a family life for all children and youngsters of the Fourth World."[20]

It makes the link between the GRP and the making of *Courage* very prominent; during the construction process of the GRP a highly mediatised public and political debate had emerged concerning this contentious issue.[21] The first chapter of the GRP is totally devoted to "the right to have a family life", based on an endorsement of the disastrous effects of the out-of-home placement of children for all parties involved and on the argument that these interventions make the poverty problem of families in deep poverty even worse.[22] As a result, we decided to examine the ensemble of oral testimonies and the 72 images that form the main body of the book, inspired by the question whether and how the visuals of *Courage* attribute to the out-of-home placement debate in constructions of the child-in-poverty and the family-in-poverty.

Our enquiry follows the framework Cara A. Finnegan proposes in order to do rhetorical history of visual images that accounts for *images as history* as well as *images* in *history*.[23] In her approach, Finnegan stresses the importance of two out of four senses of rhetorical history distinguished by David Zarefsky: the historical study of rhetorical events and the rhetorical study of historical events.[24] According to Finnegan, rhetorical history of the visual must entail both senses, for taken together they enable to pay attention to each of three distinct but equally important moments in the life of

[19] Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice, 3rd Edition* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 12.

[20] BMLIK, *Courage*, 105 (own translation).

[21] Bradt et al., "Poverty and Decision Making".

[22] *Algemeen Verslag over de Armoede,* 25–72.

[23] Cara A. Finnegan, "Doing Rhetorical History of the Visual: The Photograph and the Archive", in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, eds. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 195–214.

[24] The other two are the history of rhetoric and the rhetoric of history, see David Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetorical History", in *Doing Rhetorical History*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 19–32.

photographs: *production*, *reproduction* and *circulation*. Production focuses on the questions *where* images come from, literally, and *why* they appear in the spaces where they are found. The space here is the artefact, *i.e.* a photobook.[25] Reproduction acknowledges that images are hybrid identities – reason why Franklin refers to the many contradictions in images and other scholars put an emphasis on the ambiguity of images.[26] It is equally important to acknowledge that one does not encounter images in isolation, but as part of a montage, an arrangement that, for instance in a photobook, is the result of particular choices and the framing of ideas. Circulation calls attention to the very fact that this set of images, the photobook, circulates in a specific context, as part of particular discourses, for instance about poverty and human rights. It offers an insight in the way images contribute to rhetorical politics within a specific time and space.

Next to this *deductive* approach of applying a rhetorical analysis of the visual – in which we explore how visual artefacts are embedded in a specific historical context and discourse – we also develop an *inductive* analysis to generate a rhetorical understanding of the distinct generic characteristics of the visual artefact. For this analysis, we develop a "generic criticism", which focuses on how the recognition of a visual artefact as belonging to a particular category inevitably influences its interpretation.[27] This implies that we also analyse the *substantive* as well as the *stylistic* characteristics of the images. In what follows we use Finnegan's threefold framework to structure our paper.

Production: Establishing Alliances

In 1979, the year UNESCO proclaimed as the International Year of the Child twenty years after the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), ATD Fourth World had published a photobook with images of children in poverty.[28] In 1986, Geen [Eugeen] Lettany and Jan Vanhee visited a traveling exhibition of selected images from the 1979 book in Antwerp. It was the direct source of inspiration

[25] On the history of the photobook, see Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History volume I-III* (London: Phaidon, 2014). The first volume was first published in 2004, the second in 2006.

[26] See, e.g., J. Anthony Blair, "The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments", in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, eds. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 41–61; Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*; Sontag, *On Photography*.

[27] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*.

[28] Mouvement ATD Quart Monde (with a preface by Joseph Wresinski), *Le Monde me doit l'Avenir: 30 Ans d'Histoire de l'Enfant du Quart-Monde par la Photographie* [30 Years History of the Child of the Fourth World by means of Photography] (s.l.: Editions Science & Service, 1979).

to come up with something "similar but better", as they put it.[29] Lettany would be the photographer and Vanhee the project leader of the *Courage* photobook. Between 1986 and 1998, as a volunteer and ally of the poor, Lettany made over 3000 photographs for BMLIK.[30] Initially, he mainly took photographs of adults and families when they were attending BMLIK activities, such as group meetings, public action, dialogues with policy makers, day trips, and weekends.[31] As such he became known and trusted, long before the *Courage* project, among BMLIK volunteers and families in poverty who attended BMLIK group meetings. Another part of the target families, however, did not attend group activities and could only be reached through monthly home visits by non-poor volunteers who informed them about the BMLIK activities and – most crucial – listened to their lifeworld and experience knowledge.[32] The testimonies were carefully written down and took a central role in BMLIK publications, such as *Courage*.[33]

In 1996, Lettany went a step further in his social photography when Vanhee, the then BMLIK president, proposed to make a photobook to celebrate BMLIK's 15th anniversary. Their main goal was to *give voice* – and we would add, to *give face* – to families living in deep poverty in Ghent.[34] Lettany entered the private lives of BMLIK families and was allowed to photograph their daily lives within the intimacy of their homes.[35] This was not an easy task because of the taboo and feelings of shame, guilt and anxiety that families in poverty experience.[36] A key role in opening doors to the "poorest" and to allow the camera was played by three women: Lieve De Cleen, Jo Proot and Tiene Putman, who as

[29] Interview with Jan Vanhee, 14 May 2016. The international exhibition travelled to Louvain, Bruges and Antwerp. Bearing in mind Franklin's use of Rich's poem, it is worth mentioning that together with the exhibition Vanhee also brought the following report to the attention of his companions: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, *Breaking down the Wall of Silence: How to Combat Child Labor* (Brussels: ICFTU, 1986). See Jan Vanhee, [Note on the International Exhibition 30 Years History of the Child of the Fourth World, 14 May 1986], BMLIK Archive, unclassified (1986).

[30] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016.

[31] BMLIK photographic archive, unclassified (1996-98).

[32] Interview with Jan Vanhee, 14 May 2016.

[33] Interview with Lieve De Cleen and Tiene Putman, 20 June 2016.

[34] BMLIK archive, unclassified (1998); see also "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[35] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016. Intimacy refers to close relations or familiarity as well as to the closeness of observation or knowledge, see: Dean, "Intimacy at Work", 179. It was particularly by the 1990s that photography had moved "from external to internal concerns", see Parr and Badger, *The Photobook vol. II*, 291.

[36] See also Helmut P. Gaisbauer, Gottfried Schweiger and Clemens Sedmak (Eds.), *Ethical Issues in Poverty Alleviation* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016).

"visiting volunteers" did home visits and developed thrust-worthy long-term relationships with families in deep poverty.[37] They had access to the hearts and homes of the most marginalised families and as such acted as "bridging figures" for Lettany's camera. Families also mediated and convinced each other to take this step of coming out the closet of hidden poverty. The complete *Courage* project was eventually shot between 1996 and 1998, during 17 daytrips in which Lettany and the three women altogether visited 33 families in poverty of which 32 agreed to publish their photographs.[38] This slow approach with spread visits, 53 in total, and shooting photographs over more than 18 months was important to create the level of trust needed for families to let Lettany do his photographic work and develop his intimate style of picturing poverty.[39]

Lettany aimed at a realistic and authentic representation: "I wanted to show how they really live" and "give visual testimony of how they really are", as such challenging the dominant stereotypes and imagery on people in poverty.[40] These joint aims for realism and authenticity are essential within documentary photography as is ambiguity, which brings us back to Franklin's comment regarding the dual approach to the treatment of actuality.[41] Another important characteristic of social photography is the element of activism or engagement of the photographer towards the photographed subject (the families in poverty) and the overall social problem (generation poverty) that is being addressed. In the case of *Courage* it is important to mention that it was not only the photographer, but the long-term engagement of a whole team of non-poor volunteers that influenced the overall production and reproduction process of the visuals and oral testimonies within the book. Besides the role Lettany played as the photographer, the engagement of Vanhee, BMLIK volunteer since 1983, instigator and project leader of the *Courage* project, and of the three women who were volunteers since 1985, was

[37] BMLIK archive, unclassified (1998); Interview with Tiene Putman, 20 June 2016.

[38] Geen Lettany, [Letter to Jan Vanhee], BMLIK Archive, unclassified (8 May 1998).

[39] Lettany's presence was clearly not that of a stranger. In this, his work shows links with, for instance, Waplington's photography's of working class domestic space in Britain, although that work also marked a shift from black and white to colour, see Nick Waplington, *The Living Room* (New York: Aperture, 1991); compare Newbury, "Photography and the Visualization of Working Class Lives". It puts an emphasis on the significance of the relationship between photographer and subject.

[40] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016.

[41] "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing"; Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*. To Franklin, an essential test of documentary value is whether the work is "reaching out and moving us", see Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 160. This statement is built on Tolstoy's notion of "art as infection", see Leo Tolstoy (translated by Aylmer Maude), *What is Art?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalis, 1904) as discussed in Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 160, 199. This dual approach in Lettany's work is discussed in the next section.

also crucial. The involvement in the process of families in poverty was more or less limited to allowing the camera to enter their lives. However, most families were revisited with the prints of their photographs in order to include them in the reproduction and selection process and gain their informed consent for reproduction in the photobook.[42] They also received and viewed the end product on a special meeting before the book was introduced to the public and media in November 1998.[43]

In this section, we attempted to reconstruct how the production of *Courage* came into being in the first place and how it was inextricably linked with the history and goals of BMLIK. As such, we addressed the question of how these photographs ended up in this book in this moment in time.[44] In what follows, we focus on the reproduction of the images in the book, on how the montage and arrangement are the result of the particular choices and framing of ideas. We combine this with a generic analysis of the images themselves.

Reproduction: Framing Poverty

The fact that *Courage* was conceived as a photobook, proved to be quite challenging for the BMLIK volunteers as they were more used to the method of collecting oral testimonies of people in poverty, which formed the basis for thematic books.[45] BMLIK had also collected throughout its 15-year existence a considerable amount of written oral testimonies. However, Lettany emphasised the importance of producing a photobook with visual images and at the same time refused to use the oral testimonies as "mere" captions with the photos.[46] Therefore, a very strict and difficult selection process was done to keep the textual section considerably smaller than the visual section.[47] Notwithstanding the avoidance of oral testimonies as direct captions with the photographs, we argue that these oral testimonies act as *indirect captions* and therefore also influence possible interpretations of the visuals, as do the introduction and the postscript.

It is striking that children are so prominent throughout the book. Children are depicted in 61 of the 72 photographs, sometimes alone, but most often together with their parents, thus within a family portrait. Considering the background of the photographer, this focus on the child is not surprising, because Lettany worked for the Catholic Youth Movement 'Chirojeugd Vlaanderen' and as

[42] Interview with Lieve De Cleen and Tiene Putman, 20 June 2016.

[43] Interview with Geen Lettany and Jan Vanhee, 14 May 2016.

[44] Finnegan, "Doing Rhetorical History of the Visual".

[45] "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[46] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016.

[47] [Collection of oral testimonies to be included in the photobook] BMLIK archive, unclassified (1998).

such advocated for children's rights.[48] Of course, the power of picturing children in addressing the problem of poverty has already been addressed extensively.[49] The child is dominantly represented as innocent (thus bearing no responsibility for its poverty) and at the same time evokes helplessness, thus appealing to the moral responsibility of adults.[50] As such, a child is a powerful symbol that combines positive change with community action and responsibility: poverty can be overcome as long as the community takes on its moral duty and engages in anti-poverty initiatives.

For that reason, we will focus on the depiction of the child throughout our analysis. We start with discussing the substantive and stylistic characteristics of the 23 photographs with only children (in poverty), followed by the 38 photographs depicting children in the presence of adults (families in poverty). We are aware that by this analytical approach we 're-assemble' the montage of the 72 photographs and as such 'reproduce' the *Courage* photographs in a new way within our research. However, we do this in order to explore the substantive and stylistic characteristics as well as the similarities of the images, which are the building blocks of the overall visual rhetoric of *Courage*.

Children: The Playing Child

[Insert Figures 1-4: Photographs reprinted from *Courage*: (1) 1/72, 14; (2) 35/72, 52; (3) 12/72, 25; (4) 6/72, 19.]

Substantive characteristics

Children are mostly framed in the centre and positioned in the forefront of the image. They are often depicted as actively moving while playing in or around their houses and during that activity they often smile, expressing joy or showing more neutral concentrated expressions as they are focused on their toys. From this perspective, the playing itself frames children in poverty as in essence normal children. Throughout the pictures, we often see children with their siblings or in group (Figures 1 and 2). The multitude of positive body and facial expressions reinforce positive feelings. It needs to be emphasised that here the element of family is already introduced by siblings who are playing (see also next section). This again is a familiar framing of "normal" families: siblings can and should play together. This is contrasted with other child pictures that prominently portray a child on its own

[48] Interview with Geen Lettany and Jan Vanhee, 14 May 2016.

[49] See, e.g., Ian Grosvenor and Alison Hall, "Back to School from a Holiday in the Slum!: Images, Words and Inequalities", *Critical Social Policy* 32, no. 1 (2012), 11–30.

[50] See Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

(Figures 3 and 4). These pictures evoke more negative interpretations and feelings, such as loneliness or neglect, because the images disturb our dominant pedagogical idea that a young child always needs (adult) supervision. Furthermore, the children are often playing in gloomy and confined places, which would generally be regarded as "child-proof": a confined courtyard (Figure 3), a dark attic bedroom (Figure 4), an unattended pavement (Figure 1) or even the street. Nature or the outdoors (Figure 2) are mostly lacking and as such these children are dominantly portrayed within an urbanised and marginalised housing context. Beside the lack of space and nature, also the lack of toys is striking.

Stylistics characteristics

Several stylistic elements also guide our interpretation. We found three crucial stylistics elements. Firstly, the use of light is a crucial feature. Figures 1 and 2 for example are outside pictures and as such have more access to sunlight, which literally and symbolically brings more light and more openness to the topic of poverty. In Figure 1 we see how the jump upwards of the rope skipping child is connected through the long line of the pavement to a clear sky which also symbolically 'gives air', freedom and thus hope for a better future for these children. In Figure 2 we see how the sunlight is reflected in the white T-shirt of the boy, which underlines his big smile and as such guides the eye of the viewer to this smile.

Secondly, the inside pictures like Figure 4 (possibly also 3) have considerable less access to sunlight and therefore the contrast between light and dark becomes more important in the interpretation. We see how these children are almost cut off from sunlight, which only comes in through a smaller window, or opening above. As a consequence, these children are playing on the border of light and dark, almost into the shadow. At the same time, however, also light (and, thus, hope for their future) is present. As such, this framing contrasts fear and hope in relation to children in poverty.

Thirdly, horizontal versus vertical lines from objects, buildings and streets can add to our interpretation of the child in poverty. We already mentioned the distinct straight, horizontal, somewhat upwards (or downwards) line of the pavement in Figure 1. This line symbolically creates the idea of past, present and future as the line is almost infinite – we see no real ending nor beginning – and therefore this line could symbolise a timeline of the child's life. As such it raises questions about the possibility for these children to move out of poverty as they grow older. The movement upwards of the jumping child adds to the idea that there is hope for these children to move out of poverty. In contrast to an infinite line, in Figure 3 the combination of the horizontal lines and the white colour of the walls produce a perspective that could be interpreted in terms of possibility or hope. However, this is abruptly ended by the vertical lines of the door behind the child

that suggests a closing off of options. As such we see how lines, colour and cultural dominant imagery of certain objects intertwine and deflect our overall interpretation of an image.

Function of the photographs[51]

We argue that the function of these "playing children" photographs could be to foreground the normality of children living in poverty as they play and enjoy themselves like any other child. As such the equality of children, poor or non-poor, is stressed, and this opens up a discourse on equal entitlements of children or children's rights. However, the images also communicate that children in poverty possibly are hampered in their play and development because of poor living conditions, their surroundings with a lack of (safe) space, a lack of diverse toys and possibly also a lack of adult supervision. As such these images could contribute to a view of poverty as a trait of deviance or bad parenting.[52] However, this focus on abnormal surroundings in the visuals also opens up the understanding of children in poverty as children "at risk" and as a consequence this could legitimise pedagogical interventions to withdraw children from their surroundings and protect them through out-of-home placement.[53] Furthermore, an unwanted function of these child photographs could be the blaming of parents of neglect by simply not being in the picture: being not around their young, playing children.[54]

Children: The Gazing Child

[51] On the notion of "function", see Sonja K. Foss, "A Rhetorical Schema for the Evaluation of Visual Imagery", *Communication Studies* 45, no. 3-4 (1994), 213–224; "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[52] See, e.g., Marshall B. Clinard and Robert F. Meier, eds., *Sociology of Deviant Behavior* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008). Which is related to the theory of a "culture of poverty", see Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); see also Edward Royce, *Poverty and Power: The Problem of Structural Inequality, 2nd Ed.* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

[53] See Karin Priem, "Photography as a Mode of Enquiry: On the Perception of Children with Educational Needs", in *Children and Youth at Risk: Historical and International Perspectives*, eds. Christine Mayer, Ingrid Lohmann and Ian Grosvenor (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 35–48, offering a visual inquiry into the out-of-home placement of children with educational needs in so-called "rescue centres". See also, e.g., Jeroen Dekker, "The Fragile Relation between Normality and Marginality: Marginalization and Institutionalization in the History of Education", *Paedagogica Historica* 26, no. 2 (1990), 12–29; Id., "Children at Risk in History: A Story of Expansion", *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 1-2 (2009), 17–36.

[54] See Foss, "A Rhetorical Schema". Unwanted in the sense of contradicting the message of "the right to have a family life" in *Courage*. We return to this in the last section.

[Insert Figures 5-7: Photographs reprinted from *Courage*, (5) 21/72 36; (6) 22/72, 27; (7) 13/72, 28.]

Substantive characteristics

In Figures 5, 6 and 7 we also see another type of "child photographs" that are – in contrast to those above – not about active movement but focus on stillness and tranquillity. Movement (the colouring hand in Figure 5, the hunching boy and cap-touching girl in Figure 6, the flower picking hand in Figure 7) as well as playing (the crayons in Figure 5, the jumping cord and the puppet stroller in Figure 6 as well as the picked little flowers within a bottle) are still present. However, the movement, play or activity seems to be paused for a moment as the child gazes at something, takes a closer look, investigates a detail.[55] The photographs show little background or contextual clues, which is the result of a stylistic choice by the photographer of producing close-ups of the children (like in Figures 5 and 6). However, a few elements or objects are present: the well-ordered crayons in Figure 5, the toys on the ground in Figure 6 or the flowers at eye-level position in Figure 7. As we will see below, when discussing the 'gaze' of those children, the importance of these elements will come to the fore within the function of the photographs.

Stylistic characteristics

The depicted children are often taken in a close-up (face and upper body, like in Figures 5 and 6) and as such the central focus is on their facial expression and especially on their eyes and mouth, as those two features have a key role in expressing facial body language. As seen in Figures 5 and 6 the children are not smiling (thus, not expressing joy such as in the "playing photographs" above) but are gazing instead, which indicates their interest in something or somebody. Their mouth is relaxed in a kind of neutral state. The gaze can be labelled as a stylistic element but its rhetorical effect comes to the fore when combined with other substantive as well as stylistic elements. In Figure 6, for example, the gaze of the boy is suggested (not presented) by his hunching bodily movement, closely to and turned towards the little girl in which he takes an interest. He has interrupted his play (see the substantive importance of the toys on the ground) to take an interest in a younger girl, perhaps to see if she is all right (as her body language can be interpreted as insecure: looking to the ground and touching her head). The light falls on the boy's back (white shirt), which makes him the central focus of the image (he also stands in the middle and in the forefront of the picture). When assessing the function of this photograph, his solidary, almost adult role of taking care for somebody else that is

[55] Or, as Franklin puts it: "The camera stills the subject", see Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 63.

more vulnerable comes to the fore. As such, the boy, who is still a child, sets a moral and positive example about how to be a "good" human being.

In Figure 5 the girl also interrupts her activity (colouring or writing) to take an interest in the photographer, and as such directly makes eye contact with the viewer. The *frontality* of her face, without smiling, elicits a kind of seriousness, which is also induced by her formal positioning at the table, the well-ordered crayons and the adult-way of holding her crayon, as if she is writing. She feels not obliged to smile to please the adult (photographer). Again the gaze, the overall facial and body language combined with the setting and activity, presents a child that sets a moral example: she behaves in a "good" way, concentrated and dedicated to her task, maybe homework.

In the third photograph (Figure 7), the girl gazes at a tiny flower that she holds very carefully in between her thumb and index finger. Her naked upper body and wet hair underline the idea of nature. The case of cigarettes and lighter do not undermine this function of the photograph, as most attention is drawn to the gaze and the hand of the girl and secondly to the bottle with flowers. She expresses a kind of unspoiled curiosity, which we dominantly connect to normal childhood. At the same time, she sets again a moral standard as her "good" behaviour communicates to respect and even admire small things, especially nature and the environment.

The use of light is one of the main stylistic elements of the photography and from the interview with Lettany we also know that he had the greatest difficulties to handle light, especially with the interior photography because these families often lived in small dark houses with little windows or no direct natural light.[56] Moreover, families in poverty often closed curtains or even hung up drapes because they were afraid of neighbours looking inside and who could alarm official organisations because of the bad living conditions for the children.[57] Indeed, children were often placed in residential care after a complaint of a neighbour or a schoolteacher. Therefore, these families mistrusted everybody accept their own family circle. Thus, more than once Lettany had to ask permission to open up curtains or even windows to maximise the light. Figure 5 is a good example of that. The abundant light comes in and falls on the girl's drawing paper and hair. Her face is a bit hidden, which creates a kind of intimacy in her eyes, this in contrast to the glowing hair that creates an angelic appearance. Also in Figure 7, the extreme light behind the girl, combined with the upwards positioning of her head, creates almost a religious feeling. The girl with the flower becomes surrounded with an aureole of light.

Function of the photographs

[56] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016.

[57] Interview with Tiene Putman, 20 June 2016.

The underlying message of these gazing children is that growing up in poverty does not necessarily lead to moral decay or immoral behaviour, which is an assumption that is predominantly made about families in poverty and which often was used as a reason for out-of-home placement to protect children from immoral influences. On the contrary, these photographs communicate about "enlightened" (angelic) children in poverty that morally set exemplary behaviour for the non-poor viewer, and thus society. Notwithstanding – or perhaps even due to – their poor living circumstances and daily difficulties, they take care for others (Figure 6), respect nature and discover beauty in the most trivial things (Figure 7), and act responsible (Figure 5).

As a consequence, these photographs possibly rhetorically challenge viewers to revise prejudices towards people in poverty, as well as to re-examine one's own moral beliefs and behaviour towards others in society. In addition, these photographs heavily aestheticize poverty due to the (extra) use of light, the specific framing through close-ups (and avoidance of distracting contextual elements) as well as the focus on the gaze of children. All these elements combined contribute to the persuasion of the viewer to see people in poverty not only as a danger, a nuisance or burden. On the contrary, these depicted children do not ask anything at all, instead they set a moral standard just with their presence and confront the overall non-poor society to question its own moral standards and possible shortcomings.

Besides the 23 photographs of children, *Courage* contains even a bigger part of 38 photographs of families. These images all contain the combination of children and adults in the role of parents. When analysing those photographs on substantive and stylistic characteristics, we found parallels, contradictions and ambiguities, as is the case with the images of children. We present them by re-assembling the photographs under the topics of the "guiding" and the "guarding" parent. It is here that the theme of out-of-home placement most explicitly comes to the fore.

Family: The Guiding Parent

[Insert Figures 8-9: Photographs reprinted from *Courage*, (8) 11/72, 24; (9) 71/72, 94.]

Substantive elements

A large selection of the family photographs (like Figures 8 and 9) focuses on the one-on-one relationship between a child and a parent. This relationship is brought under attention by zooming in on their physical interaction, and as a consequence the photographer chooses to minimalize contextual information or clues about the living conditions. A consequence of taking close-ups (also a stylistic choice) is that poverty is more suggested than it is visually presented, which we also

elaborated on in previous work on *Courage*.[58] Lettany's main concern was to depict these families with respect and to visualise their human dignity,[59] which of course is linked with the claim that "poverty is a violation of human rights".[60]

Another striking characteristic of these parent/child photographs are the bodily movements, especially from the parents. In Figure 8, the mother is looking and pointing at the ceiling. She probably entertains her little son, who sits on her arm and also looks up because of her movement. Because Lettany had chosen not to show the object that she is reaching for, a more symbolical interpretation is induced – now she shows her child to reach for the stars, that is, to never give up fighting poverty and aiming at a better future. In Figure 9, we see how a father bends over the shoulder of a little girl to look at her work. Both photographs show the parent in an active, leading role towards the child while also the physical closeness between parent and child is emphasised. This physical closeness symbolises an intimate, thus a "good" loving relationship between parents and children notwithstanding the burden of poverty.

Stylistic elements

The overall positive framing of parents in poverty is enforced by the positioning of the subjects: the child is always directly in front of the parent. As such, the parent is backing the child, which signals the protective attitude of the parent. In Figure 8, we see the mother holding firmly her son; it is clear he can count on his mother. In Figure 9, the protective symbolism is also communicated as the father leans forward and bends over the child. Lettany's interest for contrast between dark and light is again very present. In Figure 8, the background behind mother and child is light, with the result that the gaze is attracted towards them. The mother's hand is a light beacon in front of a black background. As such, the contrast in this photograph enforces the upward movement. In Figure 9, we see again how Lettany likes to use sunlight in order to emphasise the warm, loving relationship between parent and child.

Function of the photographs

The function of these photographs is to focus on the loving and guiding parenting style of parents in poverty, to prove that they are capable and responsible parents. They do not only support and protect their children, they also want to guide them through life, into a better future, thus to move

[58] "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

[59] Interview with Geen Lettany, 14 May 2016.

[60] As is also indicated in the subtitle, see BMLIK, *Courage*, 3; see also "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

them out of poverty. This message on loving and capable parents notwithstanding the poverty issue can also be found in the oral testimonies:

> "We have always lived in misery. (…) All parents of the Fourth World hope that their children will have a better life, because they love their children. They want that their children can be happy, at home. A family is very important for children".[61]
>
> "What I haven't known in my childhood, I want to give to my children: love, affection, warmth. I live for my family. (…) I fight that they are not sent away to a boarding school. That is my goal in life (…)".[62]
>
> "It's not because we're poor that we are unfit to take care of our children. We love them very much. It is really horrific when they take your child away".[63]

The function of the guiding parent photographs shows a striking analogy with the playing child photographs as again a visual plea is made to recognize the normality of people in poverty, this time of parents in interaction with their children. As such *Courage* tries to break the causality in dominant thinking at the time, namely that living in extreme poverty inhibits parents' capability to love and raise their children.[64] Lettany's photographic style favours images wherein something is happening. This is not surprising, for the suggestion of movement adds to a sense of realism and authenticity. As such, the persuasive power of the photographs augments the public's belief that what they see is real and not staged. Obviously, the photographs do not show reality but a construction, snippets of reality, of those scenes that the photographer and the other volunteers chose to see and to depict. These snippets nevertheless add to the body of knowledge on poverty and to the rhetorical history strategies that self-advocacy organisations developed to advocate for social change.[65]

Family: The Guarding Parent

[Insert Figures 10-11: Photographs reprinted from *Courage*, (10) 27/72, 44; (11) 59/72, 80.]

Substantive elements

[61] BMLIK, *Courage,* 55 (own translation).

[62] BMLIK, *Courage,* 40 (own translation).

[63] BMLIK, *Courage*, 12 (own translation).

[64] Ilan Katz et al., *The Relationship between Parenting and Poverty* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007).

[65] To Franklin, staging is just another way of breaking the silence, see Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 195.

A part of the parent/child photographs include more visual elements or specific settings that tell directly about poverty, for often the domestic space is included when the family is portrayed. In Figure 10, family members sit on the doorstep while the child is sleeping in a stroller that seems too small to fit the child. As a consequence, questions arise about the materiality of poverty but even so on the capability of the portrayed parent. In Figure 11, we see how the baby box is cramped in between a cupboard and a table, and how the house is cluttered with stuff. The chaos is quite the opposite of what is dominantly thought of as important for children, namely a tidy and clean, thus safe house. In contrast to Figures 8 and 9, Lettany has captured the full body of the portrayed parents, which evokes questions about their appearance and especially their clothing. Different from the guiding parent photographs, Figures 10 and 11 depict parents in a much more passive state: they are sitting down (Figure 10) or standing still (Figure 11). In Figure 10, the parent sits next to the stroller, guards her child when falling asleep but does not show positive emotions or warm feelings. Moreover, the gazing and passive state of the older daughter sitting next to the mother influences our interpretation of disconnection between the mother and the young child. In Figure 11, the passivity of the standing mother is emphasised by means of the hand resting on her hip, but even more because of the active behaviour of the little boy that has lifted himself dangling in his box. Even though the baby is having fun the facial expression of the mother is rather neutral.

Stylistic elements

The positioning between child and parent is clearly more distant. The light is again crucial to highlight Lettany's main focus, the child. In Figure 10, the child is highlighted through the white wall behind the stroller, this in contrast to the black hallway, which forms the background surrounding the mother and older daughter. These contrasts influence the emotional reading and interpretation of facial or body language. The drooping shoulders and posture of the mother become more negative because of the dark background. In Figure 11, the child and the coffee pot stick out because of their white/light colour against an overall black or dark background. This contrast evokes a relation between the child and the coffee pot: the child sticks his little legs through the pillars of his baby box almost reaching the coffee pot, which is alarming because of the possibility of hot coffee burning his legs. This interpretation combined with the passivity of the mother raises questions about the alertness or capability of the mother to take good care of her child.

The function of the photograph

These family photographs tell mainly about adults performing as or becoming parents because of the presence of children. We called these images guarding parent photographs, for depicted adults are watching over the children like good parents although disconnection is forcefully communicated due

to the combination of the mentioned substantive and stylistic elements: the parent's gaze and passive posture, the gloomy setting, the different backgrounds contrasting with the enlightened but also endangered child. These parents guard their children but lack the capacity of acting as a guide to their child. The capability of parents is questioned due to poor living conditions.

In this section, we have moved beyond issues of the *production* of the images, to issues of *reproduction*. We focused on how the selection and collection of the images are both the result of particular choices and framing of ideas about poverty. We combined this with a generic analysis to get a better sense of the function of the images. In the final section, we focus on *circulation*, and we discuss how this photobook is embedded in broader social, political, and institutional discourses about poverty.[66]

Circulation: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In relation to the documentary impulse of *Courage* to represent a sharp critique on selective, intrusive and authoritative child protection interventions and to reinforce an offensive framing of the out-of-home placement of children as an inherent violation of the right to have a family life, we reflect in our concluding remarks on the potential circulation of the photobook in the prevailing discourses of that time and its contribution to a specific rhetorical politics. Rhetorical criticism indeed offers strategies to analyse the situated meaning and motive-generating functions that language, narratives and visual artefacts perform in relation to specific cultural contexts.[67] Here we attempt to analyse and explain systematically how symbolic acts and artefacts construe rhetorical processes,[68] and explore how images of children and parents in poverty situations in the "rhetorical artefact" *Courage* can become "objects to think with".

As a significant example of socially engaged photography, *Courage* has been produced as a symbolic arrangement of visual and verbal images with the aim to invite and encourage social solidarity and change on the side of the audience. As Franklin argues, social reform can be "driven by the power of photography".[69] Also Trachtenberg proclaimed that the aim of socially engaged photography is "to teach the art of *social* seeing",[70] while stimulating viewers to transcend their self-

[66] Finnegan, "Doing Rhetorical History of the Visual".

[67] Barry Brummett, *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* (London: sage, 2006); Kris Rutten and Ronald Soetaert, "Narrative and Rhetorical Approaches to Problems of Education:. Jerome Bruner and Kenneth Burke Revisited", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 4 (2013), 327–343.

[68] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*.

[69] Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 58.

[70] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 192 (original italic); see also "[Anonymous 2017] Details omitted for double-blind reviewing".

interest and a society with humanity and solidarity at its core can be established. The "documentary affect" of *Courage* might indeed turn "upon the viewer's emotional identification" with people in poverty and lead to a critical reflexivity of the wider society and to a public and political debate on poverty and anti-poverty strategies.[71] However, the awareness of a documentary affect also urges us to not ignore the "social ambiguity of the image".[72] The complicated dialectical interaction between the creators and interpreters of a rhetorical artefact inevitably leads to "vagueness and ambiguity".[73] It could result in a paradoxical and even counterproductive evaluation of the images, as visuals often communicate unwanted or unintended functions of which the makers were maybe not even aware.[74]

In the case of rhetorical constructions of children and parents in poverty situations, it is extremely relevant to consider how the ambiguity of the images might feed into the cultural imaginary since a dominant view of children as "deserving" and parents as "underserving poor" appears as a historical continuity in Western societies.[75] Our analysis shows that the assemblage of visuals and text predominantly accentuates children as innocent, enlightened and even angelic human beings who bear no responsibility for their poverty; they are portrayed as deserving, not-yet-miserable hope for the future yet are, however, raised in miserable and marginal living conditions. The latter is tricky: if children are "at risk", who is then to blame: their parents as "underserving poor" who are responsible for the situation of their children or a wider society that remains blind for poverty as a social problem?

Nevertheless, *Courage* also tries hard to offer convincing portrayals of loving, capable and responsible parents who, despite their own harsh circumstances in the past as well as in the present, aspire a better future for their children. As an overall message, the photobook seems to frame families in poverty situations as "normal families", reflecting a rather dominant social, cultural and

[71] Phillips, "Actuality and Affect", 65. In that regard, it could be said that the viewer "completes the photograph", as it is phrased in Dean, "Intimacy at Work", 183.

[72] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 225.

[73] Blair, "The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments", 59.

[74] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*.

[75] Ruth Lister, "Investing in the Future Citizens of the Future: Transformations in Citizenship and the State under New Labour", *Social Policy & Administration* 37, no. 5 (2003), 427–443; Kaspar Villadsen, "The Emergence of `Neo-Philanthropy': A New Discursive Space in Welfare Policy?", *Acta Sociologica* 50, no. 3 (2007), 309–324; Griet Roets, Tineke Schiettecat, Rudi Roose and Michel Vandenbroeck, "De Armoede van het Kinderarmoedebeleid (The Poverty of a Policy on Poverty)", *Sampol* 21, no. 10 (2014), 24–27; Walter Lorenz, "Rediscovering the Social Question", *European Journal of Social Work* 19, no. 1 (2016), 4–17.

historically rooted construction of a happy family life.[76] The book therefore (re)produces a view of the situations of children and parents as legitimate, since they are able to cope with their situation as resilient human beings. The pertinent charge of families in poverty at that time was that placing children in out-of-home care actually implied that the social problem of poverty was "dis-placed"; the social and structural difficulties for parents of raising children in poverty situations were easily disregarded since poverty was translated as an educational problem of "bad" parents, resulting in the protection and out-of-home placement of the children. However, their offensive claim for the right to have a family life seems to entail that out-of-home placement therefore should be prevented at any price. Paradoxical assumptions underpin a discourse of avoiding out-of-home placement. Such an approach might hinder and bias us in questioning the meaning of out-of-home placement in real-life, as interventions – and even out-of-home placements – might have supportive features for poor families as well.[77] In relation to how *Courage* might have been received by a wider audience in society and evaluated with reference to the implications of the action the images communicate,[78] the offensive claim for the right to have a family life might be paradoxical in relation to the right to high-quality support offered by child protection services. It is therefore important to recognise the fluidity and ambiguity of the circulation of these images within specific discourses on poverty.[79]

Indeed, our analysis shows that rhetorical artefacts such as *Courage,* always intrinsically constitute a corresponding "screen" that directs the attention to a particular perspective on complex social realities: even if a given terminology or visual representation is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a *deflection* of reality.[80] To conclude we return to the poetic approach with which we started the article. To Franklin, "surrealistic seeing forms much of the visual poetry and ambiguity that photographers find so alluring".[81] Reflections in windows are only one of many examples of surrealism in photography. In that regard, Figure 12 most probably is the most surrealistic photograph that can be found in

[76] Bruno Vanobbergen, Michel Vandenbroeck, Rudi Roose and Maria Bouverne-De Bie, "'We are one big, happy Family: Beyond Negotiation and Compulsory Happiness", *Educational Theory* 56, no. 4 (2006), 423–437. See also Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[77] Rudi Roose, *De Bijzondere Jeugdzorg als Opvoeder (Child Welfare and Protection as Educator)* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2006).

[78] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*.

[79] Finnegan, "Doing Rhetorical History of the Visual".

[80] David Blakesley, *The Elements of Dramatism* (New York: Longman Publishers, 2002).

[81] Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse*, 151. See also, e.g., Sontag, *On Photography*; Id., "Introduction", in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, ed. Walter Benjamin (London: NLB, 1979) 7–28.

Courage; at the same time it carries a symbolic power full of ambiguity that can be called emblematic for the photobook's rhetoric. One could distinguish between beauty (flowers) and decay (paint peeling off the wall) or see the beauty in decay. One could see hope and dreams in the horses on the curtains and equally notice the closeness of the curtains that emphasises isolation and the hidden character of poverty. One could perceive the photographer's reflection in the window or ignore his silhouette. The question remains: *a kind of voice is breaking silence, but what silence is being broken?*

[Insert Figure 12: Photograph reprinted from *Courage*, 8.]